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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR EEB (BBROOKS-RUBIN), AF/S (EPELLETREAU AND BWALCH), AND  
AF/EPS (MZYKRY)

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [EMIN](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [WA](#)  
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: KP CHAIR ON ZIMBABWE'S ILLICIT DIAMONDS

REF: A. STATE 18545  
[1](#)B. WINDHOEK 82

Classified By: DCM Matt Harrington for 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) On March 6, econoff delivered reftel A demarche to Vicky Dan, assistant to the Kimberley Process (KP) Chair Bernhardt Esau. The KP Chair's visit to Zimbabwe from March 14-18 will go forward with a mainly Namibian contingent, without members from civil society, but perhaps representatives from Angola and South Africa. When pressed on the human rights abuses perpetrated by Robert Mugabe's military as it profits from Zimbabwe's illicit diamond trade, Dan explained that the KP Chair wishes to address the problem without getting "diverted into the political issues." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In our March 6 meeting, Ms. Dan is the KP Chair's designee to the Working Group on Monitoring (WGM). Esau and his KP Coordinator Cecilie Mbundu were unavailable to receive the demarche. Dan explained that she would accompany Esau, Mbundu, and Namibian Diamond Commissioner Kennedy Hamutenya on the KP Chair's visit to Zimbabwe from March 14-18. Representatives from Angola and South Africa may also attend. The visit will not be a formal KP review but will be a chance for the Chair to "see for himself" the situation on the ground in Zimbabwe, said Dan. Initially, Dan mentioned the Chair's visit would be followed by a formal review mission to Zimbabwe in two to three months. Later she backtracked and stated that a formal review might not happen prior to the June KP Inter-Sessional Meeting, but "most definitely before the end of the year." Dan mentioned that the KP Chair would issue a statement on Zimbabwe that day, although she declined to characterize what the statement would say.

[1](#)3. (C) Econoff underscored that the human rights abuses surrounding the illicit diamond mining in Marange region undermined both the Kimberley Process and Zimbabwe's unity government. Dan responded that the Chair has to look at the issue from the "KP perspective and not be diverted by political issues." Econoff emphasized that the Marange region is under Zimbabwean military (not private) control which makes the situation inherently political. Dan responded that if KP were to sanction or suspend Zimbabwe, the situation could "get much worse." Suspending Zimbabwe from the KP would remove any leverage KP has over the Zimbabwean government, Dan contended.

[1](#)4. (C) Dan acknowledged that several civil society organizations (Partnership Africa Canada particularly) strongly oppose the Chair's March 14-18 visit. Econoff reminded Dan that KP is largely the result of civil society

pressure on the diamond industry and that any issue that loses civil society buy-in risks tarnishing the KP (and implicitly Namibia's Chairmanship of the KP). Econoff also stressed that the diamond companies of compliant KP partner countries, such as Namibia, suffer when other countries permit illicit smuggling of conflict diamonds.

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Comment  
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¶5. (C) As noted in reftel B, Namibian government (GRN) officials and members of the ruling SWAPO party have historic ties to Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF. The GRN has to date avoided criticizing or taking action against Mugabe and his regime. KP Chair Bernhardt Esau, who is also Namibia's Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy, appears to be trying to reconcile his obligations to the KP without going astray of his government's policy on Zimbabwe, a balance that may be very difficult to achieve. End Comment.

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Bio Note  
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¶6. (C) Dan has no background in the mining sector or diamonds. She recently graduated from the University of Namibia (UNAM) with a double major in communications and sociology. She appears bright and articulate, but acknowledged she is still learning about the Kimberley Process.  
MATHIEU